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Nation

Happy Holidays!

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Cree School Board Tours 2011

"Communicating • Consulting • Connecting" with our Communities

Dates of Cree School Board Tours:

- Whapmagoostui –January 24 and 25, 2011
- Chisasibi – January 26 and 27, 2011
- Wemindji – February 7 and 8, 2011
- Eastmain – February 9 and 10, 2011
- Mistissini – February 21 and 22, 2011
- Waskaganish – March 7 and 8, 2011
- Nemaska – March 23 and 24, 2011
- Waswanipi – March 28 and 29, 2011
- Ouje-Bougoumou – March 30 and 31, 2011
- Washaw Sibi - Dates T.B.D

Agenda Items for Cree School Board Tours

- Council Policy Manual;
- Executive Summary of *Communication, Accountability and Follow-up for School Improvement* (CAFSI) Report and Recommendations;
- CSB Strategic Action Plan (2011-2015);
- Summary of Cree as a Language of Instruction Program (CLIP) study reports;
- Language Instruction Programs.

Peace and goodwill this season

By Will Nicholls

Christmas is a time when our communities are at their busiest with people out and about celebrating. The holidays are a high-risk time for many things.

There are always a few who drink too much and are more susceptible to becoming either victims or perpetrators of alcohol-fuelled violence.

There are more fires, suicides and accidents.

Some families don't have enough and suffer while you're having a good time.

But they can be better and safer if you approach them with a clear mind. This Christmas I've included a few tips to make this a brighter and safer holiday.

At the top of the list is "don't drink and drive". Get a designated driver or have a friend on call if your community doesn't have a Nez Rouge operation. Losing your driver's permit could be the least of your worries if you ignore this one. A lot of traffic fatalities happen during the holidays. Make your community's roads safe and be responsible.

I feel that we need another designated person these days in our communities. Have a designated gun cabinet or trigger-lock key holder. If you are drinking give the keys to your gun cabinet or trigger locks to a non-drinking friend or relative. In a pinch I'm sure the local police or fire department would be happy to help out. It may not be you grabbing the guns but someone else who has had too much to drink. You can get the keys back when you are sober.

Consuming too much alcohol can make you more vulnerable and can lead to you doing things you wouldn't normally do. This removes the temptation and the possibility of spending Christmas and New Year behind bars wondering where the good times went. This is something you should do all year round but especially during the holidays. After all you want to enjoy them as much as everyone else does.

Report any domestic, family or other types of violence to the police. The holidays should be a time to celebrate and be happy. There is no need to live in fear and pain. Be good to each other and remember a good time does not mean destroying someone else's good time. Let's all look out for one another.

Don't walk home alone late at night unless you have no choice. Always let friends or family know where you plan to be. If possible, travel home with a friend if you're walking. If you have a cellphone make sure you text friends to let them know you made it home safely. Have them do the same. There's more than just the possibility of random violence or a hit-and-run by a car, you might slip on ice and injure yourself or you might stop to rest on a snowbank and never get up.

Keep an eye on friends and relatives during the holiday season as they may not be enjoying it as much as you. Talk to them and get them to join you in the celebrations. A sense of belonging and friendship can go a long way to making the holidays more enjoyable. Don't forget to give to Christmas baskets with food and toys. The holidays are a time to share.

Fires are a hazard during the holidays. Make sure your fire alarm has batteries and you'll rest easier knowing your family and friends are safer.

Keep the tree watered. As well as being more resistant to possible fires it will give off a cozy Christmas scent. Do not place it near heaters or keep it in the house for more than two weeks.

Here's hoping your holidays are bright and merry. From all the staff at *the Nation* – Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to one and all.

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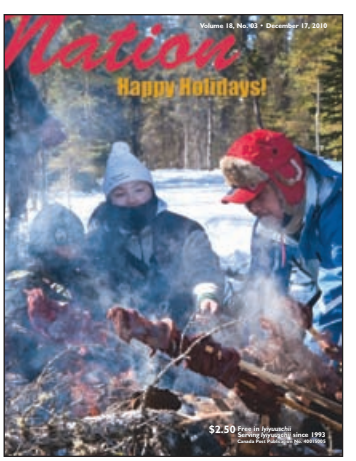

photo by:
Niels Jensen

on the cover:
Neeposh family members roast caribou meat.

A carol for all

By Sonny Orr

"O holy night…" the songstress crooned for all to hear at the local Christmas show. Ahhh, the Christmas show… it brings back memories. This time, I'll bring back some memories that belong to others and that should be shared.

She sang until no one could criticize, everyone knowing that it was a song beyond her abilities and vocal cords. No one really knew that this song, written a long time ago by a great master in the music industry, could still stir the hearts of those who heard it, sang by people of great passion, bringing tears to even the evilest of all dictators.

Yes, the same songs sung by little ones, bring out the same tears too. Above the hustle and bustle of others waiting for their child's class to come onto the grand stage of the school, straining to hear the mere sound of your young'uns expressing their own passions for Christmas, hoping that your small camera can focus from that range, knowing that it is a memory that will last forever. This is Christmas pageant time.

The preparation for this great event seems to go to those with the greatest height. They get the envious job of stringing decorations on the strange ladder thing that goes up every school gymnasium. Even the baskets are prepared in all their glory. Somehow, the single microphone and amplifier make memories more memorable, since this is probably the only way to remember things clearly. Ahhh, even the goofiest moments make the concert and show fun, taking all those hours of practice away in a second. Why couldn't he remember that he was a shepherd or an angle, you wonder for years to come.

I asked a few Elders how they managed back in their time and they told me…

Candies were scarce and really appreciated back in the '50s. The dancing was good and so was the grand feast laid out by the Roman Catholic Church whose patriarch often stated that everyone's a Catholic during Christmas feast time. The candy scramble in the snow was a particular favourite when flung from the back of a panel truck (the coolest truck ever made by International Harvester) by the Grey Nuns. And then it was off to the federal side, who had the panache to throw candies off the roof of the tallest building in town. All in all, it was a fun time.

It was basically the same for the '70s… except we had rights as Native people living in Canada. This changed a lot of aspects of the traditional Christmas, with the focus of Christmas coming from the people at hand to those who lived in the communities. This was a crucial time of change, when young ones had this special time to impress their parents with all the pomp and artistry to make memories happen. With the Polaroid instamatic, it was a cinch.

Many memories are still captured in that format, a reminder of days gone by, a past reminisce of technology and our people. A blur of technological formats changing within a few decades, resulting in things that Steven Spielberg probably wished he had had as a kid.

Today, hi-def and the ability to put everything you did in the past 24 hours on DVD and post it around the globe, if you wish. But… nothing takes away that feeling when you see your kids on stage, singing their little hearts out or bashfully hiding behind the song sheet. You just can't take that feeling out of your own production.

Today, I watch the kids and let me tell you, they're a smart bunch. They can do things we never thought of back in the day. Memories last as long as you make them, but today, memories can be captured forever. Record your kids' show…

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A man of the people

Though he passed away in early December, Smally Petawabano will be remembered for generations

By Will Nicholls

Smally Petawabano was a man who will always be a part of the people who knew him. His way of being was the Cree way of life. He lived a good life and his loss will be felt. Smally passed away on December 3 and his absence will be felt. What he taught all who knew him will live on for generations.

Smally was one of the original signatories of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Though many remember him for that he was so much more. He was one of the first young chiefs amoung the Cree. Born in 1936 he became a chief at the age of 25 in 1961. He would serve the Cree of Mistissini for three consecutive terms. This in a time when chiefs, unlike today, did not receive a salary. He chose to serve his people and it showed. As Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come said, "You served because you believed in your community and they believed in you."

Coon Come said he looked at Smally as a friend and mentor. "I saw him as a bridge, not only between the youth and the Elders, but between the youth and the trappers." Smally was respected and listened to by everyone. His father, Jean-Baptiste, taught him how to live and survive by becoming part of Eeyou Istchee. In keeping with this tradition Smally has passed on those skills to his children and others. Because of his experiences in the bush and in the community, Smally said when the youth were in the community they didn't listen as much because of all the diversions. He said the bush was more relaxed and there was always time to talk about anything.

Smally brought what he was taught and lived to his time as a chief. "He had a passion and vision for both his community and the Cree Nation that he shared with us. He was devoted to our community and it was evident in the way he served the people," said Coon Come.

Smally went on to be a band councilor after his time as a chief. Later, he returned to his roots and returned to the land. He hunted and trapped on his family's traditional territory. He often said he enjoyed being his own boss and getting to eat more of the food he had growing up. He admitted times were hard when he was young. It was a time when many families had difficulties getting enough food.

Even so Smally proved he was Dab Eeyou at an early age. According to an interview he did with the CTA, Smally said he snared his first rabbit at age 5 and killed his first moose at 11. Even for a Cree he was a prodigy.

When he returned to the land in later years Smally told everyone that his wife was a dedicated partner in that life. He said, Laurie was a hunter in her own right as she had killed moose, caribou and bear.

Those who knew Smally knew he was also a humorous man. He was always ready to smile and share. Smally would joke or tell stories that made us all smile.

One story he would admit to but never told himself unless asked was about the two Indian Affairs agents who came in winter to Mistissini. The band office at that time was small and only had a couple of desks. One of the agents tried to tell Smally what he was going to do and he had no choice. Smally showed him the results of his choice when he grabbed him and threw him out of the band office. Smally then locked the door and went back to calmly talk to the other Indian Affairs agent.

Smally was a defender and servant of the people. He may have made no money for his service to the community he loved, but he had honesty, honour, respect, friendship and trust from all parts of the community.

Smally showed us what a man could be while being true to himself and the Cree way of life was all about.

It is not only his 11 children, 39 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren who shall miss his presence. The Cree Nation will have to go on without his wisdom and laughter.

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Porte-parole de l'opposition officielle en matière de développement du Nord québécois

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Que Noël soit
pour vous et vos proches un heureux jour
et que la nouvelle année vous apporte
joie, santé, bonheur et prospérité.

May Christmas Day be a happy one for you and your loved ones and may the New Year bring you joy, health, happiness and prosperity.

Luc Ferland
Député d'Ungava
lferland-unga@assnat.qc.ca

Lakeside View Global Vision
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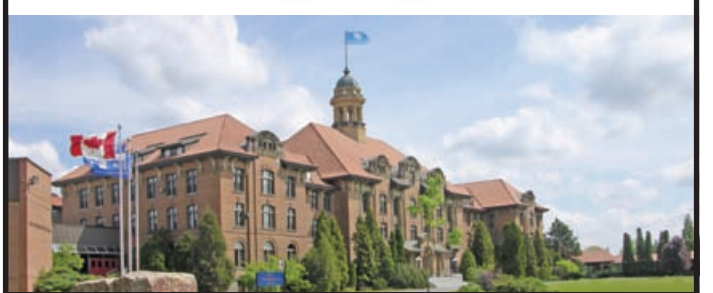

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Wishing everyone in Eeyou Istchee a safe and happy holiday season.

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Moose Cree First Nation

Chief Norman Hardisty Jr., Charlie Cheechoo, Deputy Chief,
Council & Staff

Beyond the coffee table

Louise Abbott, Niels Jensen and COTA launch a new book about the Crees

By Amy German

The Crees of Eeyou Istchee were not only celebrated but had their likenesses up on a big screen at the McCord Museum for the launch of *Eeyou Istchee: Land of the Cree*, a stunning photo essay with accompanying text about the seasonal traditions of the Cree.

The book was written by photographer, writer and filmmaker Louise Abbott, with photos by Abbott and collaborator Niels Jensen. Though Abbott has worked in Eeyou Istchee before and published other books of a similar nature, it was her first time collaborating with the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association (COTA) for a project of this nature.

Abbott said the idea for the book came about from COTA Executive Director Robin McGinley, who had previously hired her to take images for the association's photo archive. Once a proposal was in place and agreed upon, Abbott and Jensen were sent into the bush to take photographs and to pore over scores of archival images to look at the Cree's history in James Bay.

The book looks at traditional activities from goose hunts to moose hunts and from walking-out ceremonies to laying Elders to rest. The accompanying texts are in English, French and Cree.

"We did our best to cover all of it. It would have been impossible to cover every single tradition but we certainly did our best. We alluded to in the text or at least tried to allude to things that we might not have been able to capture in pictures, such as the first kill. We never happened to be at a ceremony for that but we went to a walking-out ceremony in Wemindji," said Abbott.

At the November 30 launch at the McCord Museum, Crees from all walks of life rubbed elbows with patrons of the arts and other interested bodies to catch a first glimpse of the new book. As they mingled, images from the book were projected on a large screen to showcase the beauty of Eeyou Istchee and its people.

"It's a real privilege to be invited to this book launch. I saw a similar book just last week. I made a presentation at the Cree Mineral Exploration Board in Quebec City and I was given a huge book on the Inuit with something similar. But, looking at this book, I don't want to be a little biased but pictorially our book looks much better," said CREECO President Jack Blacksmith with a wink and a smile.

Blacksmith said he hoped that the book brings others to the north to discover the beauty of James Bay and the richness of its people and culture.

"This is wonderful, we need to inform people of what life is like in Eeyou Istchee. Tradition still lives on up there, it is still very strong and it is good for Quebecers to see that the Cree are still using the land. Perhaps through this they will understand why it means so much to us," said Able Bosum, who also attended the event.

photo by Niels Jensen

Kenny Neeposh

As one of the evening's speakers, Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come praised the project and hoped that it will promote a greater awareness of Cree culture and Cree trappers.

"I am distressed and distraught (that I am not in it). How can you come to the Cree territory and take pictures that do not include the Grand Chief? What is up with that?" said Coon Come, with smile. His photo is actually on page 9.

The main speaker at the launch was Philip Awashish, from the Cree-Naskapi Commission and one of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement's original signatories.

He spoke of how Aboriginals have been robbed of their place in North America's Euro-centric history books to the point of impoverishment but that is why a publication like this is so important.

"We Eeyou have our own story, our history about our activities, events and experiences in Eeyou Istchee. I am pleased that this book provides a brief history of Eeyou. This is an introduction and an insight to a vigorous tradition and strong connection with the living past or present, especially a strong and living connection with the land, Eeyou Istchee," said Awashish.

For more info on the book: www.ruralroutecommunications.com

HBCA 1987/363-W-34/5, N79-210

Two Cree women stretch a hide in Waswanipi in 1946.

Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse Québec

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Photo: Jean-Charles Hubert

From left to right: Édith Cloutier, Executive Director of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, Oscar Kistabish, President of the Board of Directors of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, Gaétan Cousineau, President of the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse and Tina Mapachee, Director on the Board of Directors of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, on Nov. 25, 2010 during a ceremony held in Montreal.

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse congratulates the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre on organizing the annual Gabriel-Commanda walk for the elimination of racial discrimination.

Christmas Events

Here's a listing of several events going on at Christmas in some of the communities.

Mistissini
Dec. 31-Jan.1 – New Year's celebration

Nemaska
Dec. 22-Jan. 2 – Christmas festivities
Dec. 28-29 – Arm-Wrestling Contest

Oujé-Bougoumou
Community Tree set-up
New Year's Bash

Waskaganish
Flea Market (Food collections)

Whapmagoostui
Dec. 21-Jan. 2 – Christmas festivities
Dec. 25 – Christmas feast
At press-time the communities of Chisasibi, Eastmain, Waswanipi and Wemindji could not confirm their scheduled activities.

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Val-d'Or's Native Friendship Centre honoured by human rights commission

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDFNC) received a special mention from the jury of the Prix Droits et Libertés (Rights and Freedoms Prize) 2010, awarded by Quebec's Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission) on November 25. The VDFNC garnered the special mention from the commission in recognition of its work to combat racism, which is also the theme of this year's honours.

A delegation from Val-d'Or, that included VDFNC President Oscar Kistabish, Board Member Tina Mapachee and Executive Director Édith Cloutier, travelled to Montreal for a special ceremony to honour their efforts in terms of quashing racism in Val-d'Or. During it, the jury highlighted the VDFNC's efforts, particularly its originality in terms of awareness campaigns to fight racism and activities, such as the signing of the "Friendship Declaration between Peoples" in Val-d'Or and the city's annual Gabriel-Commanda Walk against racism.

At the ceremony, Cloutier said, "These events involve a great amount of citizen participation and in Val-d'Or, this entire process was made possible by openness and mobilization. The face of our city is changing and each citizen, Native or non-Native, contributes to establishing the means of a harmonious transition. The challenge of co-habitation is now being met."

Mistissini's Wreath of Hope campaign in full swing

Mistissini's grocery store Meechum Red'g once again has its annual charity drive underway to help spread holiday cheer to the community's neediest families.

According to Meechum's Beverly Quinn, there are three ways to help those in need this season. The annual "angel tree" is already up within the store for those looking to purchase a toy for a needy child who might not receive one otherwise. Those looking to participate can select an "angel" off the tree that features the age and gender of the child and purchase an age-appropriate gift for them that Meechum will include in that family's Christmas basket.

Cash donations are also welcomed as all proceeds go to providing gift vouchers that families can use to purchase groceries for the holidays and throughout the year. As Christmas comes but once a year but the need doesn't end on December 26, Meechum also uses the remaining funds to help needy families the other 364 days of the year through vouchers when they are needed.

New this year is a special fundraising campaign targeted at Mistissini's hockey fans as the store will also be raffling off hockey tickets to see the Boston Bruins take on the Montreal Canadiens on January 8. The tickets were donated by Mistissini's Caisse Populaire and the winner will enjoy the game in the luxurious Desjardins booth at the Bell Centre. This package includes gas money, two nights in a downtown Montreal hotel and $500 in spending money. The total prize value is worth $2000.

Tickets can be purchased at $5 each and $20 per booklet. The draw for the hockey package will take place on December 31.

For more information or to make a contribution, please inquire within Meechum Red'g.

Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com

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10-3

feature

Talking about suicide from all directions

The 8th annual Dialogue for Life First Nation's suicide conference battles the issue from every angle

By Amy German

For eight years now the Dialogue for Life Network has been bringing together First Nations from Quebec, Labrador and around the world to discuss suicide, its implications on First Nations communities and how better to help those affected by it.

Comprised of a three-day pre-conference for professionals, such as frontline workers, police and those who counsel in the field of mental health within First Nations communities, and then a three-day conference for families and youth who have been affected by suicide, this year's event drew between 800-900 First Nations to the Delta Hotel in Montreal from November 27-December 2.

According to conference organizer Normand D'Aragon, the face of the conference has changed quite a bit since it began eight years ago as it has grown to accommodate just about everyone whose life has been affected by suicide. It originally started out as an event geared towards informing and educating frontline workers who dealt with suicide but now it has grown into a multifaceted event that offers something for professionals and also the families they help with specific components for youth.

D'Aragon said it is the programming for youth that has exploded in recent years and that this year the conference had between 250-300 youth attendees and presenters.

"One of the major differences this year was our focus on the importance of the youth stream. At every time slot throughout the conference there was at least three different workshops that were specifically for the youth," said D'Aragon.

The theme of the conference was "From All Directions, Honouring Life Together." D'Aragon said the theme was particularly suitable this year as the event brings First Nations together from all over Quebec, Nunavut, Nunavik and Labrador as well as from the United States and even Maori from New Zealand.

Having visited with the Maori on behalf of the Dialogue for Life Network earlier this summer, D'Aragon said the overseas attendees were a welcomed addition as they are just starting up their own suicide prevention strategies.

"We have so much in common with them even though they are from the other side of the planet. Of course, the culture and context are different but the issues are so much alike," said D'Aragon.

In catering to the new variety of clientele, particularly the younger generation, D'Aragon said the event offered two major workshops on bullying. One was geared towards frontline workers at the pre-conference and the other for youth during the conference.

For the youth specifically the event also offered a special workshop in collaboration with the National Aboriginal Health Organization and its National Aboriginal Role Model program. D'Aragon said the workshop was a remarkable success.

What really surprised the organizers this year was the popularity of the youth events, said D'Aragon, since every one of them was filled to capacity. There were also youth presenting workshops, particularly on how they have coped with suicide through various mediums

such as writings and video-making. D'Aragon said at times the youth events were like mini film festivals.

Marissa Georgekish, 17, from Wemindji, was a workshop presenter at the conference. Having experienced the impacts of suicide and suicide attempts amongst the youth within her community, she decided to attend on behalf of her community.

"It is awesome being here. We have written stories about the people we have lost to suicide," said Georgekish. She further explained that she was there because she wanted to put a positive spin on life for youth in this situation by helping people talk about their experiences through writing.

In terms of the social aspects of the event, D'Aragon said there was also another celebrated new addition – karaoke.

"It worked out really well. It was all about relaxing and having fun together in the evenings," said D'Aragon who explained how a bit of silliness helped people blow off steam and form bonds together.

Like previous years, the conference put on its annual powwow to celebrate the diversity of the Native cultures of the participants and the gala evening and awards ceremony was also held to honour those who have made a difference when dealing with suicide.

Elder Robbie Matthew from Chisasibi was honoured at the gala for his lifelong achievement in transmitting culture, wisdom and Cree values. Also Innu Elder Maninoush Poker from Pakua Shipi was honoured similarly.

Whapmagoostui resident Buckley George, who has spina bifida and is confined to a wheelchair, was also given the youth award.

"He is a symbol for transforming obstacles into strength, wisdom and compassion for others. Building that kind of strength is really what we are after. When we have obstacles in life, instead of thinking about going to the negative side of things, we can transform them into positive strength and Buckley is a hero in the way he exemplifies this," said D'Aragon.

Another major element at this year's event was restorative justice and representatives from various First Nations' justice departments were there to learn what they could in order to bring back new ideas to their communities.

Ronnie Otter from Waswanipi said he thoroughly benefited from the restorative justice seminars concerning youth.

"We learned how to facilitate restorative justice circles for youth involved in the criminal justice system or a school-based conflict. The circle brought people together to understand one another, to strengthen relationships between the accused and the victims, and to resolve community problems," said Otter.

Losty Mamianscum was there as a researcher for the Crees, and attended various workshops and seminars. He explained he had learned a great deal about trauma at the event.

"There are a lot of people in the criminal justice system who have experienced trauma through family violence or various types of abuse and that changes their world view. When they experience something like that, it affects their ability to cope with certain emotions. It's a factor in how they behave or why they get caught in the cycle of the revolving doors of the correctional institutions," said Mamianscum.

When *the Nation* caught up with Mamianscum, he was in a workshop with Thunder Bay's Dennis Windigo, who had recently been a presenter at the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association's (CWEIA) Family Violence Conference.

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Happy Holidays and best wishes for the New Year.

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Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come
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Windigeo, who offers workshops to Crees in the north through the Health Board, said a great deal of what he focuses on in his workshops is trauma. Whether that trauma stems from domestic violence or is a reaction to a suicide, Windigo uses similar techniques to help his clients heal.

"Whether I am talking about family violence and how partners hurt each other, I always go right back to the clients I am working with so that the healing is about them. There has to be a connection to the self for that healing to progress and move through. If I'm dealing with people who have been affected by suicide, I am getting them to connect with themselves about the person they lost and what they are dealing with. If they have loved ones who are attempting suicide, I will ask them how that impacts their lives and how that lives inside of them. I want to make a strong connection to it so that they can start to release the stress and worries about being under that pressure all of the time," said Windigo.

Grief does not necessarily have to come from that one stage, it could be a whole mess of things that just pile up," he said.

He found the workshops particularly helpful as each individual he met had something new to contribute.

"WHEN WE HAVE OBSTACLES IN LIFE, INSTEAD OF THINKING ABOUT GOING TO THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THINGS, WE CAN TRANSFORM THEM INTO POSITIVE STRENGTH."

A public health worker for the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay said he was at the conference to have a break from his job and take in a few workshops to help him deal with some of the stressors of his job and do some healing when it comes to suicide.

"My brother committed suicide when he was 14, and I was 19. It takes time for people to understand suicide and get to the healing part because it's a big shock in your life? When that shock wears off and reality hits you, many people cope with it through drinking and drugging and I went through those stages. When I finally addressed it, I understood how to unblock all of those things that have been hurting my life.

While the youth may have been the focus, there was a great deal going on for professionals at the event.

Debbie Dedam-Moutour hosted a table on behalf of the National Indian and Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization to present their resource materials to First Nations communities. While the majority of the products relate to smoking cessation, Dedam-Montour was presenting their latest tool, a book for children titled Sam's Bear that explains mental development and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) to children.

"The story is told from the perspective of the child's teddy bear and so it helps you understand in an gentle manner what is going on and how you can be supportive to a child who has FASD," said Dedam-Montour.

Though the CWEIA did not end up presenting at the conference, members of the group were on hand to attend the event. CWEIA president Doris Bobbish is also on the Board of Directors for the Dialogue for Life Network.

Though the CWEIA was bumped off the schedule due to time constraints, their goal had been to present the organization, its mandates and vision and then look for feedback from other First Nations attending the workshop.

Though they didn't present, Bobbish has made many contributions to the event over the last eight years.

"I have been with this organization from the very beginning. I was there the first time they did this conference where I spoke about working with individuals with persistent mental health issues and what the point-of-view is of frontline workers and how to deal with that," said Bobbish.

Despite not having the CWEIA present, everyone *the Nation* spoke to, said the conference was a tremendous success.

However, according to D'Aragon, this year's conference will never be as successful as the next one.

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No Cree stamp of approval

Mistissini rejects the Matoush project, but Chibougamau is all for it

By Amy German

While the verdict might be in from the Cree of Mistissini to reject Strateco Resources' bid to build a uranium exploration ramp deep down into the Otish Mountains, just a few kilometres down the road the town of Chibougamau is singing a different tune.

On November 23, the final in a series of hearings began in Mistissini over whether Strateco Resources should be granted a permit to create a 5-x-5-metre hole that would run 300 metres down into the Otish Mountains for uranium exploration based on the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the project.

Mistissini Chief Richard Shecapio made it clear in his presentation to a series of governmental and Cree panels that the EIS failed to provide adequate information on the project and therefore must be rejected.

"The EIS submitted by Strateco has raised many concerns. Specifically, that baseline data has not been collected thoroughly and does not fully reflect the abundance of wildlife in the area. There are several independent reports that substantiate this claim. The view is, if Strateco could not even take enough care in the preparation of this assessment, will they make the effort when it comes time to implement the measures needed to safeguard the water, plants and animals in and around the Matoush site," said Shecapio.

His concerns were further backed up by almost all of those presenting at the Mistissini hearing, including environmental group MiningWatch Canada, the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society as well as many Mistissini residents and others concerned from the south of Quebec.

Shecapio's rejection of the proposed project was later backed by Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come on behalf of the Grand Council of the Crees in a press release dated November 25.

"Being from Mistissini myself, I know the community's decision was not taken lightly. It took several years of fact-finding and soul-searching. Decisions of this nature are especially difficult for First Nations, particularly at a time when we are seeking out development proposals to address very real employment challenges. The Cree Nation as a whole remains open to mining development opportunities that are compatible with the Cree way of life. However, as Mistissini indicated, the community felt the potential impacts of this proposal far outweigh its benefits. With this in mind, the Grand Council of the Crees (of Eeyou Istchee) will respect and support Mistissini's decision," said Coon Come.

> "...WILL THEY MAKE THE EFFORT WHEN IT COMES TIME TO IMPLEMENT THE MEASURES NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD THE WATER, PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN AND AROUND THE MATOUSH SITE."

This reaction came swiftly after Strateco made statements via its own press release that stipulated it had received "strong support" for the project, particularly from the Crees though they did acknowledge Shecapio and the community's rejection of it.

Shecapio was quick to response to Strateco's statement. "Strong support is how it reads, and I can only say, it was in fact the total opposite. There were approximately 300 residents of this community present who overwhelmingly opposed this project, and Strateco's press release completely misrepresents this message."

While the Mistissini meetings may have shown disapproval for the project, according to MiningWatch Canada's Ramsey Hart who presented in Mistissini and then attended the Chibougamau hearings, the climate at both meetings was dramatically different. Plus, the information presented by Strateco CEO and President Guy Hebert was not the same.

In his presentation, Hart pointed out that one of the major problems with the EIS was that it does not include information from an April 2010 document which states two million tonnes of tailings would be dumped into two nearby lakes.

Hart said he retrieved this information from a report done by a consultant for Strateco and though it is not set in stone, other alternatives to the nearby tailings ponds, such as burying them, could be possible but they were all significantly more expensive than creating a tailings impoundment in nearby water.

According to Hart, the other problem with the tailings impoundments in

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

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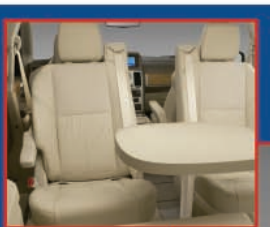

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nearby lakes was that Hebert told the Chibougamau meeting Strateco wouldn't create tailings ponds because of Quebec's Mining Directive #19 and because the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission does not approve of them.

Hart said he would be submitting these discrepancies to the deciding panels to show that Strateco has been telling one story to the Cree and another to the people of Chibougamau.

"Whatever they are going to do, besides dumping it into a lake, there are significant cost implications and those aren't reflected in this public filing. One of the main purposes of the public filing is for investors and to state the cost feasibility and economic feasibility of the project, however they are not accounting for potentially tens of millions of dollars of capital costs for constructing a tailings facility," said Hart.

Hart said there were many in Mistissini who spoke out against the project, including Gordon Edwards from the Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility who highlighted the company's failure to provide information on basic aspects of radiation and its hazards. Hart kept much of his arguments focused on water.

While he described the EIS has having a "lot of gaps," Hart said the biggest had to be its failure to provide information on exactly how much water would be going into the exploration ramp. Without that basic data he said it would be almost impossible to predict the impact on the water being used for the project or the water within its vicinity.

Hart explained how the rock mentioned within the EIS is described as being on the high end of permeable for sandstone, which means that water is going to move through the rock. With the water table being high in that area and the fact that it is also surrounded by wetlands, this will cause a problem.

"You don't have to be a genius to figure that you put a hole down into the rock there, that there is going to be some water coming in. But, the EIS says that they don't expect any appreciable high water coming in," said Hart.

Hart said the same public filing states that mine water is going to be a big issue and there is going to be significant volumes of water coming in. With that, two different stories are being told and once again, the environmental impact on that water cannot be determined.

According to Hart, from what he can extrapolate from the EIS, there will be significant impacts on local water and henceforth local wildlife, something the Crees were promised would never happen.

"STRATECO HAD EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE THIS COMMUNITY AND EARN ITS TRUST, AND JUST DIDN'T DO IT. WHY DID STRATECO WAIT UNTIL NOW TO REALIZE THAT MORE EFFORT WAS REQUIRED IN THIS AREA?"

In Chibougamau, Hart said the climate at the hearing was dramatically different, with the majority of the attendees in favour of the project for its economic spinoffs.

Listening to Chibougamau Mayor Manon Cyr's address at the hearing, Hart said she first described herself as opposed to the project because of her concerns for the environment but that over time the community had been satisfied with the information they obtained on the project. It was later pointed out that those in Chibougamau had never invited anyone to speak at their hearings who was critical of the uranium industry or had any different perspective.

"(Mayor Cyr) recognized the importance of a social license for a project like this amongst the Cree but she then followed up by saying that she thought it was a case of them just not understanding the project hinting that if the Cree were better informed they would reach the same conclusion as she did," said Hart.

In response, Shecapio stated, "If we want to talk about what was understood, it is clear in my mind that Mistissini's position shows concern for the environment, the land we live on, the land we depend on. These values have been maintained and handed down over many thousands of years. The mayor of Chibougamau needs to understand that it is an oversimplification to discount our fears as being simply borne out of a lack of understanding."

While the communities of Chibougamau and Mistissini may not be on the same page with the project, it will be now left up to panels provided by groups such as the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and other government bodies to decide as to whether Strateco will be able to obtain licensing for their uranium exploration ramp project.

Hart, along with many of the others, will be presenting reports to the panels that will later on make a decision as to whether the license will happen. However there is nothing stopping Strateco from providing the information they were accused of not providing. With it they were surely attempt to sway Mistissini again as they have already declared in their press release.

Strateco's release stated it "intends to develop and deepen relations with the Mistissini Cree in order to respond appropriately to their concerns and eventually secure their support."

To that Shecappio replied, "It all comes down to trust, and reflecting on the clear and blatant misrepresentation of this community in Strateco's press release I think it will be extremely difficult to bridge this gap. Strateco had every opportunity to engage this community and earn its trust, and just didn't do it. Why did Strateco wait until now to realize that more effort was required in this area?"

While for now this portion of Cree land that has been slated for development is still hanging in the balance, only time will tell its fate.

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Coming out with a smile

CBC North's Roderick Rabbitskin has a secret to share with everyone in Eeyou Istchee

by Steve Bonspiel, Special to *the Nation*

Roderick Rabbitskin got his job at CBC North partially because he wanted to address the under-representation of women on the airwaves.

At the time, very few women were playing large roles in politics, but they were also all but invisible in every type of leadership capacity.

When he started in 1993, his first female interview was then-Chisasibi Chief Violet Pachanos. Since then, women have earned promotions to deputy chief of the Grand Council (Pachanos) and director of the Cree Health Board (Dianne Reid) to name but a couple of important professions in Eeyou Istchee.

While Rabbitskin was getting his feet wet as a journalist and in his current job as host of Eeyou Dipajimoon, he was hiding a secret that he didn't want anyone to know. He is gay and he was ashamed to admit it.

The main reason behind keeping it a secret was obvious: Cree territory is not the most welcoming place to admit you are a homosexual and his childhood proved that.

Growing up in Mistissini, Rabbitskin put up with his share of bullying while he attended Voyageur Memorial School.

"I always knew when I was young that I was different from other young guys," Rabbitskin told the Nation in an exclusive interview. "I always knew on the inside that I was gay. When I was in school I'd look at guys instead of girls.

"I always hung around with the girls and never played with the boys. Because of that, I went through a lot of hurt and a lot of bullying from other kids. I was spit on, people swore at me almost every day. They threw stones at me and as I grew older, adults bullied me as well," he said.

"I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO BE GAY. IT'S JUST WHO I AM."

Rabbitskin realized around "10 or 12 years old" that life for him would be different.

"I always felt alone growing up and hurt by what people were saying and doing to me. That's how I knew I was gay, by the treatment I got from people. I always said to myself that there was nothing I could do to change it.

"There were times in high school when I didn't go to public places or events because I knew what was going to happen if I went. I didn't associate with people, I just stayed away. A lot of times I was alone. The only people I could talk to were my parents and my brothers and sisters," he said.

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The Chief and Council, and community members of the Cree Nation of Oujé-Bougoumou would like to acknowledge and congratulate our two local Business Award recipients at the 3rd Eeyou Economic Group Annual Gala 2010 held in Val-d'Or on November 6, 2010.

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Your services and commitment to our communities and economic growth is well-appreciated. May you all continue to strive in making your businesses a success and continue to be role models!

ONCE AGAIN CONGRATULATIONS!

Sadly, Rabbitskin was also sexually abused by a family friend at a young age, pushing him into a deep depression. He saw no way out of his situation but he somehow found the strength to carry on.

"There were times I was so alone that all I did was cry. I was hurt and I was begging for someone to help me, but I didn't have anyone," he said.

Rabbitskin turned to his family for support and questioned why the bullying was happening to him. But they didn't have answers that helped him get through those tough teen years.

"They told me it would end soon but I asked them 'When is it going to end? I don't think it's going to end.' I was tired of it."

The Nation visited Rabbitskin at his apartment in Montreal and even to this day, the sorrow and feelings of helplessness as a young gay teen in a small Cree community are hard for him to talk about.

Friends and family members know he is gay, but the decision to come out publicly, in the only newspaper serving the nine Cree communities, was not an easy one.

He put it out to his friends through phone calls, Facebook and private chats. Should he come out? The feedback was an overwhelming yes.

Over the years, people who targeted Rabbitskin as a teen have matured and grown as individuals, to the point where they realized the harm they caused him.

"All the hurt that I went through and all those people who hurt me when I was young have come up to me to say 'Roderick, I'm sorry for what I did to you when you were young.' They feel terrible. They apologized to me so I don't have anything against them," he said.

"Kids sometimes come up to me and ask me if I was bullied as a kid. I can see on their faces that they are going through a similar thing, so I talk to them."

Last summer, Rabbitskin was back home in Mistissini for a visit when a 14-year-old boy came up to him and said that he heard from his mother what Rabbitskin went through as a child.

"I asked him if he was being bullied and he said yes. So I sat down and talked to him and he started crying," he said.

"Before I left he took down my number. So far he's called three times to talk. I could feel what he was going through.

"For all the hurt I went through as a child, I just want to reach out and help those kids who are going through the same thing, because I know what it's like. "

Coming out in *the Nation* "feels like a weight has been lifted off of me," he said, but he regrets not being able to tell his mom and dad before they passed away, 27 years and 12 years ago respectively.

He did muster up the courage to tell the rest of his family about three years ago, however.

"I had a hard time telling my family," he said. "I was afraid I was going to lose them. I told other friends and they encouraged me to tell my family. It took me years to come up and say, 'I'm different, I'm gay.'"

Admitting a secret this big doesn't come easy, but the way it came out surprised Rabbitskin himself.

"The first one I told in my family was my brother-in-law. He was in Montreal with my sister and we were walking on St. Catherine St. It kept bugging me that I should tell them, but I never thought he'd be the first to know," Rabbitskin said.

"He told me 'You're still my brother-in-law and it doesn't change anything. I'm glad you told me.' That helped a lot."

From there, Rabbitskin opened up to his four brothers and three sisters and to more friends, but he kept it secret from others, fearing their reaction.

When he told his sisters Minnie and Elizabeth, they merely smiled and said, 'You know Roderick, we always knew, we were just waiting for you to come and tell us.'

"Both of them said they would still love and support me and not treat me any different. I haven't lost any of my family members since I came out.

"I regret not telling them way before. I always felt so miserable inside, knowing that I couldn't tell them that I was gay because I was so afraid to lose them. I'm so glad now that they know.

"I didn't choose to be gay. It's just who I am."

Rabbitskin's coming-out party wasn't just for his peace of mind; he was doing what he does currently as a host interviewer for CBC North – helping others.

"I started thinking about the younger generation. There are a lot of them who know they are (gay). Today is different compared to what I experienced. People are more open-minded and they accept others for who they are. It's a lot easier today," he said.

"I was always in misery, always in pain because I kept it to myself. Since I came out and told my family and friends, I feel so different compared to when I was still in the closet."

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James received the Joan Homer Student Leadership Award, which recognizes the achievements and influences of a current student at an Ontario college who fosters leadership, growth in others, and whose accomplishments assist students or the college to advance their goals.

"I am humbled by this award. Not only do I stand tall and proud for the Native community, but for the races and students of Canadore College," said James, an adult learner, father and grandfather.

The award was presented at the Higher Education Summit in Toronto on November 22, 2010. Canadore is proud of James' determination, commitment and involvement within Canadore College and its surrounding communities.

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Commission de la construction du Québec

Dakota House sets community on fire

Dakota House recently visited Nemaska Cree Nation in northern Quebec during the opening of Luke Mettaweskum School's new building addition. The event was filled with numerous artists, such as actor Nathaniel Arcand, who teamed up with House and held a workshop on the film and television industry. The evening celebration was emceed by the two actors, who acknowledged the graduates, past and present, from the school. Local entertainers performed and shared the stage with Claude Mackenzie, formerly of Innu group Kashtin.

House also recently celebrated six years of sobriety and is on a healing journey with "Going M.I.L.E.S.", a leadership program he founded. M.I.L.E.S. is an acronym for motivate, inspire, lead, empower and succeed. House is also a single father of four, a facilitator, a writer and a martial artist. He has his hands full, with requests coming in from all over the country for the Going M.I.L.E.S. workshops, which are geared to youth and community members.

House stated, "In the 21st century we have seen a change in our young that needs to be addressed." He added, "A change that is causing concern in most, if not all, of our leaders. Our young are straying away from tradition and responsibilities to a life of MuchMusic and Facebook mixed with sex, drugs and alcohol to top the list."

House said he started his own program that is not reliant on government funding because it is "unstable and not on par for First Nations communities."

Community members usually make a request to bring in House and he looks at each request on its own merits and goals and if it fits the Going M.I.L.E.S. mandate to inspire and motivate communities. He uses the arts as a medium to tap into the natural talents and abilities of participants. This deals with issues that affect communities such as low self-esteem, parenting, drugs and alcohol, and gang intervention. On a regular basis, House brings in other top entertainers to host video dance parties and concerts and shows, such as the Scott Ward Hypnosis Show.

The Going M.I.L.E.S. team members have been making positive waves across the country with House leading the way. For more information on the program go to: www.goingmiles.com or www.dakotahouse.ca for bookings for your event or conference.

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SMALLY PETAWABANO
31 JANVIER 1936 – 3 DÉCEMBRE 2010

C'est avec tristesse que j'ai appris le décès de monsieur Smally Petawabano le 3 décembre dernier. Chef de la nation crie de Mistissini de 1962 à 1976, il a fièrement représenter son peuple lors de grands moments historiques, notamment en étant signataire de la Convention de la Baie-James et du Nord québécois. En ces moments difficiles, je tiens à faire part à tous les proches de monsieur Smally Petawabano de mes plus sincères condoléances et de ma profonde sympathie.

SMALLY PETAWABANO
JANUARY 31, 1936 – DECEMBER 3, 2010

It is with sadness that I learned of the death of Mr. Smally Petawabano on December 3. Chief of the Mistissini Nation from 1962 to 1976, he proudly represented his people at major historical moments, including being a signatory to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. In these difficult times, I would like to express to all the relatives of Mr. Smally Petawabano my most sincere condolences and my deepest sympathy.

Luc Ferland, Député d'Ungava,
lferland-unga@assnat.qc.ca

May you be filled by the magic of Eeyou Istchee
during this Christmas Season.
From the whole team at SEBJ
Société d'énergie de la Baie James
Centrales de l'Eastmain-1-A et de la Sarcelle et dérivation Rupert

Recognizing the future

CREECO and the Grand Council treat Cree students in Montreal to dinner to celebrate their hard work

By Amy German

The purpose of the evening was to acknowledge those who had left their communities and moved to Montreal to pursue higher learning.

Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff and CREECO's communications officer Jonathan Saganash rounded up Montreal's top-performing Cree students for a night of fine Japanese cuisine at Toyo, not only to acknowledge their academic efforts, but to give them a respite from school stress before the exam crunch started. Attending the meal were Francis Meskino, Enomey Masty, Bella Blacksmith, Ginette Rojas, Louise Macleod, Ginette Rojas, Stephanie Landry Wapachee, Amanda T. Sam, Rachelle Lafond and Joshua Loon.

"It was really important for CREECO, the Board of Compensation and the Cree Regional Authority for you to be here tonight because we like to do these kinds of little things. It's a tradition that started many years ago by the late Stephen Blacksmith and the late Albert Diamond. Every year they would go to North Bay, Ottawa and Montreal to take the students out because you guys are the future of the nation," said Saganash, toasting his invitees.

Saganash spoke first to the students in recognition of their academic success but also to say a big thank you to them for what they have sacrificed in order to go to school. Some of them have struggled as single parents while keeping up with class work, others have left behind families, communities and culture that they are homesick for.

At the same time, Saganash wanted to remind these students that upon completion of their studies, the Cree Nation, and CREECO in particular, will always be looking to welcome them home with open arms and waiting jobs.

Likening their struggles to get through school with witnessing his own parents' struggle to graduate from university, Iserhoff expressed how much he looks up to those who have made the sacrifice and endured the hard work.

"I wanted to show my appreciation to people who are going to school. I can say that I envy where you guys are at today and I really want to encourage you with your education. They say the youth are our future, but young people are here today and we have to help you find ways to make it to where you want to go with what you are studying. We want to build you up for the future and this is one way of saying keep going, don't give up no matter what you're facing while you're in school," said Iserhoff.

Having cut his own studies in Public Administration at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue short because he was elected to the position of Deputy Chief in 2005, Iserhoff said he has always had completing his studies in mind. He even said he might pursue medical studies once he is no longer in political office though he wished to steer away from the field of proctology.

Going around the table, the students talked about how grateful they were to be able to pursue their studies and each one of them had the intention of contributing back to Cree society once they were in their respective careers.

Enomey Masty, who has taken on a double major at Concordia University in Anthropology and Sociology, said she chose this path because of her desire for a challenge and, with a giggle, her admiration for Indiana Jones movies. With her education she hopes to one day be a business owner but also form some sort of humanitarian organization for the Cree Nation.

"I am taking a course in the political economics of food and that has really pushed me into the sustainable development area in the north in terms of agriculture because of global warming," said Masty.

Joshua Loon, who is studying Business Management and Marketing at Vanier College, said his studies were all about improving local economies for the Crees within the communities.

"In Mistissini, I used to work at the True Value and a lot of the people would go to Chibougamau to buy the exact same product because it would be a dollar cheaper and they would get better service. So we need to advertise Cree businesses. You never know, you could attract customers from different provinces or other nations, like the Montagnais. We also need to exchange ideas so that businesses develop and make more profit," said Loon.

Once the bellies were filled and an incessant amount of laughter was shared, Saganash and Isheroff reminded the students to keep on working hard and not to give up so that the two of them can once again look forward to taking these students out to celebrate more successes.

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Cree-Naskapi Commission
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La commission Crie-Naskapie

May the magic
of Christmas touch
everyone in
Eeyou Istchee.

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Season's Greetings

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Banning spirituality

Oujé-Bougoumou tears down a local sweat lodge to satisfy the community's Christians

By Amy German

Oujé-Bougoumou's Redfern Mianscum just days ago witnessed his community tear down a sweat lodge he built with his bare hands earlier this fall. The community did so under a new bylaw that was passed in late October banning all traditional spiritual practices within reserve limits after a petition was passed requesting it.

Mianscum said he had built the sweat lodge in the backyard of his friend, Lana Wapachee, on October 5 because he felt there was a need for a source for traditional healing within Oujé.

"The reason why I built it was because I have seen a lot of drug and alcohol abuse and people going through different problems. I have been there in my own community and I have also faced these problems. So I wanted to take part in the healing process and help people in the community. This is what I do as a sweat-lodge carrier – I try to help people change their lives," said Mianscum.

Mianscum said the sweat lodge helped several people within the community who came to him in search of a traditional means of therapy. He said he saw the sweat lodge give these individuals a sense of identity as the practice has been lost in some Cree communities for quite some time.

While Mianscum was never approached by any community members who were in opposition of the sweat lodge, he said he was aware that it was being widely discussed amongst them. Not long after the structure was erected, a petition began to circulate to get it torn down.

"There were 123 signatures on the petition to take the sweat lodge down but I think that there were six or seven signatures that were invalid, one of them signed twice and some were minors and outsiders," said Mianscum.

The petition however sparked a community meeting from October 27-29 where it was decided that all Cree traditional spiritual practices would be banned in Oujé-Bougoumou.

The resolution reads that the Council of the Cree Nation of Oujé-Bougoumou:

– must exercise its inherent rights of self-government and self-determination and will be exercising it right in governance to provide services solely based on community needs and common interest;

– exercises its collective rights of the members who have expressed their concern with the type of traditional practices being done in the community;

– hereby declares that the sweat lodge along with any form of Native Spirituality Practices such as Powwows, Rain Dances et etcetera do not conform with the traditional practices and teachings of our Elders.

The resolution also stated that the community was founded under the Christian faith and values of the community's Elders and past leadership and that the community will continue to uphold its faith in guidance with God.

With that bylaw in place, Wapachee was informed on November 11 that the sweat lodge had to be torn down.

The bylaw was passed in spite of the fact that at the 2010 Annual General Assembly of the Crees, a resolution was passed at the request of Cree Elders from different communities and NNDAP workers throughout the Cree Nation to protect Native spirituality and its practices in all of the Cree communities.

In that regard, Mianscum said there is a growing movement of individuals within his community and other communities who have been angered over both the ban and the fact that the sweat lodge was torn down. In the wake of this, a series of letters have been submitted in support of Mianscum to the Oujé-Bougoumou Band Council with one even coming from an Anglican minister who has served the Cree communities since 1994.

photo by Louise Abbott from the book *Eeyou Istchee: Land of the Cree*

As for Mianscum, he feels he was not given the opportunity to explain what the lodge was about to those who disapproved of it. He said their arguments were that the practice was not in fact part of Cree ancestral practices and that this was something taken from other Native cultures out west or down south. He also believes that the whole debacle is out of line with Cree culture and values.

Since the sweat lodge was torn down, Mianscum said he is currently researching his next move, will be seeking legal council and has even written Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come to look for direction. At press time he had not yet received a reply.

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Community Health grads receive their college certificates

By Michel Goyette

Marc Bertrand Director CAT, Mabel Herodier Executive Director CBHSSJB, Graduate Joni Saganash, Graduate Laurie Ann Georgekish, Tony Wawatie, Community Health Representative Teacher CAT, Daniel Marcotte, Executive Director CAT

The Agora of the Centre d'étude supérieures Lucien-Cliche at the Cégep de l'Abitibi Témiscamingue in Val-d'Or was almost full for a special graduation ceremony on Thursday evening, December 2.

Laurie Ann Georgekish (of Wemindji) and Joni Saganash (of Waswanipi) received a certificate of college education making them both the first Community Health Representatives (CHR) to receive such a degree in Canada.

Cégep director Marc Bertrand said, "The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) can be proud of this accomplishment. Creating a program that combines both a scientific medical approach including the traditional Cree culture was not an easy challenge."

In a heartfelt speech, CBHSSJB executive director Mabel Herodier said it was not easy at all. She took the time to address the crowd in Cree and English as many Elders were present. She said that throughout their 18-month-long college program, the two graduates distinguished themselves through their class attendance, participation and quality of their work.

They both achieved their goals despite all the obstacles they faced, like leaving their family, friends and community and moving to Val-d'Or where housing and living is often a challenge. The result is something to be proud of, being the first to receive certificates of college education as CHR. Herodier underlined the important role these two women now have in promoting their position and the health of their communities.

CHR teacher Tony Wawatie expressed similar thoughts about these two graduates and how they have distinguished themselves in their program.

As the two graduates received their certificates, there were several people in the audience shedding a tear of pride and happiness for these two young women.

Soon you will be able to see both Georgekish and Saganash at work since they now have the ability to work in multi-purpose community health. They will inform, educate and support the people in achieving better level of community health.

There will be more graduates joining them in the future as two more groups of students are expected to graduate in June 2011 and January 2012.

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Cree School Board
Commission Scolaire Crie

May the Peace and Joy of the holiday season be with you throughout the coming year.

Merry Christmas from all of us at the Cree School Board.

Gordon Blackned
Chairman

Abraham Jolly
Director General

Best wishes for the holiday season!

photo : Paul Brindamour

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By Lyle Stewart

Imagine all the people...

Do you remember exactly what you were doing 30 years ago this moment?

As I write this, on the evening of December 8, 2010, I can vividly recall where I was on the same evening in 1980 and what I was thinking, even, just as can millions of other folks of a certain age around the world.

At 15-and-a-half years old, laying on my bed listening to K-97, the FM album rock station in Edmonton, Alberta, I was shocked to hear the DJ hysterically interrupt a song with the news that John Lennon had just been shot and killed in New York City. As the station went on to play Beatles and Lennon tunes all night long, I wrote the date and the time on the wallpaper above my bed. When I visited the same house about 10 years ago, I could still make out the writing in faint ink on my old bedroom wall from so many years before.

I was a typical teen in many respects – rebellious, smart-assed and cocky – but in search of meaning and answers to questions I didn't even know how to put into words. Like so many of my contemporaries, I idolized Lennon and the 1960s in general, believing I'd been cursed for having been born too late to share in what I know now to have been mostly media hype.

Those thoughts came flooding back as I listened to online audio excerpts of the remarkable nine-hour interview conducted by Rolling Stone magazine writer Jonathon Cott with John Lennon on December 5, 1980, only three days before his death (the tapes were only recently discovered in a closet, where they'd been forgotten). In it, Lennon identifies the need so many people have to elevate their heroes onto unsustainable platforms.

"It's the same idol worship," Lennon said in an observation that is just as true today. "They pick a president, they put him up there, and then they set fire to him because he couldn't solve their problems, because they're always looking for someone else to provide for them."

But Lennon says he can't be anyone's god or guru, even though that's the role so many of us wanted him to play.

"I've never claimed divinity. I've never claimed a purity of soul. I've never claimed to have the answer to life… I only put out songs and answer questions as honestly as I can. But I can't live up to people's expectations of me, because they're illusionary."

It's the same problem with trying to find revelation in psychedelic drugs, Eastern mysticism or extremist ideology.

"The hardest thing is facing yourself. It's easier to shout, 'Revolution and power to the people,' than it is to look at yourself and try to find out what's real inside you and what isn't…. When I was younger, I used to think that the world was doing it to me and that the world owed me something. And that either the conservatives or the socialists or the fascists or the communists or the Christians or the Jews were doing something to me. And when you're a teenybopper, that's what you think."

But, Lennon adds in an unsparingly honest, even anguished tone, "I'm 40 now and I don't think that anymore because I found out it doesn't fucking work! The thing goes on any way and all you're doing is jacking off and screaming about what your mommy or your daddy or society did."

It's a shame we couldn't hear what the man would have had to say at the age of 70. It would no doubt have been far more interesting that the endless celebrity worship/character assassination that passes for journalism today. He might even have had trouble finding an ear in the media.

But people still listen. Only a few weeks ago, my daughter, who happens to be 15-and-a-half years old, bought a John Lennon poster to tack up on her bedroom wall. What comes around, I thought.

And evidently, Lennon understood even if it might have pained him. It's part of being young and searching for answers and one's place in the world. There is a need for the "jacking off and screaming," he admitted.

"One does have to go through that (for the people who even bother – most assholes just accept what it is anyway and get on with it, right?) So for the few of us who did question what was going on, I have found out personally – not for the whole world – that: I am responsible for it, as well as them. I am part of them, there's no separation. We're all one…."

And that's the heartening thing about listening to that Liverpudlian accent that is so distinctive and familiar. He really still believed in his own central message right up to the end.

"It's give peace a chance, not shoot people for peace. All you need is love. I believe it. It's damn hard, but I absolutely believe it," he told the Rolling Stone writer. "I see the world through different eyes now. But I still believe in love, peace and understanding. As Elvis Costello said: what's so fucking funny about love, peace and understanding?"

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The CREE JOBS PARTNERSHIP (CJP) is a not-for-profit organization made up of three Cree entities sharing the same objectives and mandates; that is to train and create sustainable jobs for Cree people. These include CREECO, CHRD, and CSB.

The CJP signed a two year agreement with the provincial and federal governments committing to the creation of 301 sustainable jobs for Crees.

The CJP is currently searching for a dynamic and enthusiastic individual to fill a contractual position as:

FINANCE OFFICER

Based in Mistissini, Quebec

Summary of Role

Under the authority and direction of the CJP Project Coordinator, the CJP Project Finance Officer assists the CJP Project Coordinator in implementing and administering the financial, administration, and reporting policies and procedures established for the CJPP. The Officer implements these procedures to ensure compliance with the project and the funder's policies and guidelines.

Qualifications

- Vocational diploma in accounting combined with one (1) to three (3) years of experience in accounting;
- Knowledge of spreadsheets and accounting software applications;
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills;
- Ability to work independently and within a team environment;
- Written knowledge of English;
- Fluency in English and Cree;
- Fluency in French is considered an asset.

The CJPP is prepared to offer a competitive salary and excellent employment benefits to its successful candidate.

If interested, please submit your resume and letter to:

CJP Project Coordinator
Cree Job Partnership
187B Main Street, Mistissini, Quebec G0W 1C0
Fax (418) 923 2050
By email bella.loon@ccdc.qc.ca

For more information, you can contact Bella P. Loon at: (office) 418 923 3888 ext 44. The position is open to both men and women. The CJP thanks all the candidates for their interest, but will contact only those selected for an interview.

The CJP is currently searching for a dynamic and enthusiastic individual to fill a contractual position as a:

JOB COACH

Summary of Role

Under the authority and direct supervision of the CJP Project Coordinator, the Job Coach: provides support to the CJPP employers, provides support to CJPP trainees, provides reports on these support and liaison activities with CJPP employers and trainees, and carries out key parts of the CJPP communication strategy with CJPP employers / trainees and with Cree Communities.

Qualifications

- A relevant vocational training diploma or equivalent experience
- At least five (5) years of relevant experience in the construction, catering / facility management industry, including relevant management/project management experience;
- Demonstrated positive experience working as an autonomous, self-reliant, self-starting worker;
- An appropriate knowledge of Excel, Word;
- Good interpersonal, communication and motivation skills;
- Ability to communicate effectively, in both the written and verbal form;
- Knowledge of the First Nations employment and training field;
- Good ability to speak, write, and comprehend English and French;
- Certificate in a construction trade or other pertinent trade is an asset;
- Knowledge of the Cree language is an asset;

If interested, please submit your resume and letter to:

CJP Project Coordinator
187B Main Street, Mistissini, Quebec G0W 1C0
Fax (418) 923-2050
By Email: bella.loon@ccdc.qc.ca
For more information please contact Carly Gagnon at:
418-923-3888 or: cgagnon@ccdc.qc.ca

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Sometimes life seems unfair

by Xavier Kataquapit

Sometimes life does not seem fair. That's how I felt when I heard the news about my friend Audrey Allaire on November 4. I was shocked to hear that she had passed away at the young age of 44. All I could think of was that this was really unjust.

Audrey was the face of Wabun Tribal Council in Timmins. I met her when I first became associated with Wabun 14 years ago. Over the years she had accomplished the position of Executive Assistant and in doing so performed a valuable assistance to the organization. Just about everybody in all the Wabun First Nations knew Audrey. She was a problem solver and had some very good organizational and people skills. She knew how to make everybody feel at ease and good about themselves.

Audrey had a great sense of humour and she always had a kind word ready for anyone who appeared at Wabun's front door. Every Halloween she made sure to bring the kid out in everyone by leading most of the Wabun staff to dress up for the day and share a lot of good laughs. She was a softhearted person but Audrey could also handle tough situations and she made sure everything rolled along smoothly in the Wabun front office.

Last spring she started showing concern over what she and everyone else thought was an ear infection. After seeing a specialist, she got the news of cancer and then started treatment. A short while ago she took time off work to recover and we all thought she was doing OK. I feel sad that I did not get a chance to say goodbye when she was alive but then again I am very happy about all the wonderful hellos my friend Mike and I had with her over the years.

Audrey's parents Raymond and Dora Allaire certainly did a lot of the right things in raising her. I know from past experience with my own family that a death of one's child is always the worst possible thing life can hand you and my thoughts and prayers go out to the family in their loss of Audrey. I know that although her fiancé Pierre Dupuis had a short time with her, I understand that he sees that this time was precious and filled with lots of laughter and kind moments.

Audrey was a member of Matachewan First Nation and originally came to us from Algonquin roots of the Temiskaming First Nation in Quebec. As a First Nation person it was very easy for me to connect with Audrey. I recognized that same type of kind, good-natured way that I recall in so many Native women I know from up the James Bay coast. She also amazed me with her skill for learning new things as demonstrated in her picking up knowledge on computers and website design.

To make things worse on this cold grey day I just found out another Wabun member, Margaret Naveau from Mattagami First Nation, passed away on October 29 at 62 years of age. Margaret was a Sutherland originally from Winisk First Nation or what is now known as Peawanuck First Nation on the Hudson Bay coast. She spoke the same Cree dialect as me and I enjoyed chatting with her in our own language whenever we met up. She leaves her husband Normand Naveau and many children. Margaret was another one of those wise, strong, kind and good-natured First Nation women.

Nothing I can ever say will make the hurt go away for any of Audrey's or Margaret's family and friends but I know that their wonderful lives will have an enormous positive affect on everyone they knew far into the future.

At first thought I feel robbed of two wonderful women and at too young an age. I am sad, as are many, that we won't have the opportunity to see Audrey and Margaret again. The best we can do is to carry on feeling really great that we were lucky to spend time with these two. To keep their memory alive we can pass on stories, memories and anecdotes to others we meet along our way. I hope I have done a little bit of that here in these words today.

ESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS SETTLEMENT IMPO ANT DEADLINES

September 19, 2011 - Common Experience Payment (CEP)
CEP is paid to former students who resided at a listed esidential School

September 19, 2012 - Independent Assessment Process (IAP)
ou may be eligible if you suffered sexual or serious physical abuse or other abuses that caused serious psychological effects.

APPL NOW to receive the compensation owed to you.

For legal advice or assistance
call 1-888-565-9912

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CLASSIFIEDS

BIRTHDAYS

We would to wish a happy 13th birthday to our son, brother, Hockey player Cree Nation Bears # 14 Jesse James a.k.a. JJ Scipio on December 5th, 2010. We love and we miss you so much! I know that you are happy living in Mistissini and going to school there and it was your dream to play with the Cree Nation Bears and you got selected! :) I was happy and I had tears knowing that you're going to move. :) I'm always going to be there to support you no matter what. I know you love hockey and play hard my son. Lub ya so much! xoxox from your Mom Lisa, Dad Richard, brother Toby and your little sisters Chelsea and Miley May Scipio

We would like to wish a happy 3rd birthday to our son Jedaiah Wapachee-Trapper on December 19th, 2010. Wow! Three years already! Time sure flies by. We love you so much! Enjoy your special day! From: mom & dad (Jessica & Corey)

PERSONAL MESSAGES

We just wanted to say, HELLO !!!!!!! ... from Ouje Secondary 4-5 :)

HOLIDAY MESSAGES

I would like to wish happy first Christmas to my first twin handsome grandsons Colton-Hawk Isaiah Masty and Dalton-Hawk Rupert Masty. You are both special blessings to our Masty family. I love your smiles when you both smile at granny, when she comes home from work! I love you with all my heart! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year boys! Love Granny Liz

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333.

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.tel-jeunes.com)

Parent helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parentthelpline.ca)

Drugs: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality resources center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688. (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: http://www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources.html

Service Canada

Notice to the Eeyou Istchee Cree Nation

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Citizen Services Officer

Service Canada is undergoing a process to create a pool of Citizen Services Officers for its office in Chisasibi and possibly for other Cree communities.

The process is posted on the Public Service Commission (PSC) of Canada Website. Interested candidates must apply online at **www.jobs.gc.ca** and provide appropriate details by **January 10, 2011** inclusively.

To obtain more information, call INFOTEL toll-free at 1-800-645-5605.
Information also available in French on the PSC Website.

Canada

CREE INDIAN CENTRE OF CHIBOUGAMAU
CENTRE INDIEN CRI DE CHIBOUGAMAU

To the Petawabano family and the community, our sincerest condolences.

Smally was a man of vision and honour. He was a member of the Committee that created the Cree Indian Centre. We are grateful for his contribution to the wellbeing of First Nations wherever they may be. He will be missed but will live on in the legacy he leaves behind.

The Board and Staff of the Cree Indian Centre of Chibougamau.

Your Northern Airline of choice!

Air Creebec

For reservations, charters or information, call toll-free: 1-800-567-6567
Or visit our website at: www.aircreebec.ca

The Board of Directors at Niskamoon Corporation as well as the entire team would like to send their warmest holiday wishes to all.

May this holiday season bring upon you and your loved ones joy to your souls, warmth in your hearts, and happiness in your homes.

Be grateful for your families, your friends, and the people that surround you and take the time to show your appreciation during this festive season.

Wishes of peace, health, and prosperity for our brothers and sisters in Iyuu Aschii.

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